

NO DRAWINGS

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(54) PROCESS FOR FLAVOURING TEA

(71) I, ANDREW HARLEY, a British Subject, of 36 Upper St. James's Street, Brighton 7, Sussex, do hereby declare the invention, for which I pray that a patent may be granted to me, and the method by which it is to be performed, to be particularly described in and by the following statement:—

This invention relates to a process for flavouring tea, and is especially concerned with a process for the introduction of flavouring matter, such as fruit juices, initially in liquid form, into dry or raw tea-leaves.

According to the present invention, there is provided a process for flavouring tea comprising the steps of spraying dry or raw tea-leaves with liquid flavouring matter, exposing the sprayed tea-leaves to normal ambient air, and heating the tea-leaves thus treated by indirect heat, the tea-leaves being agitated throughout the process.

Preferably, the tea-leaves are thinly spread on a vibrating surface during each of the steps of the process.

The tea-leaves may be sprayed for five to ten minutes, exposed to ambient air for three to five minutes, and indirectly heated in an oven or drier for five to ten minutes at a temperature in the range 350°F. to 500°F.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, which will now be described by way of example only, raw tea-leaves or dried tea-leaves in the finished form in which they are normally sold and used, are spread thinly on a conveyor belt which is arranged to be vibrated so as to agitate the tea-leaves throughout the process.

The conveyor belt carries the tea-leaves past one or more spray nozzles, arranged to direct towards the conveyor belt a spray of fine droplets of a liquid flavouring essence, for example a fruit juice. Instead of a flavouring essence, or in addition to it,

a sweetening agent, such as liquid saccharine, may be used. The conveyor belt travels at such a speed that the leaves are subjected to the spray of droplets for five to ten minutes.

The tea-leaves are then exposed to ambient air, at normal room temperature, pressure and humidity, for two to twenty minutes and are then carried through an oven which is arranged to indirectly heat the tea-leaves for two to twenty minutes at a temperature in the range 350°F. to 500°F. Throughout all the abovementioned stages, the tea-leaves are carried by one or more vibrating conveyor belts.

The heated tea-leaves are then allowed to cool, while being agitated, in ambient air, and are packed in airtight containers in the usual way.

By using the process of the invention, raw or dried tea-leaves may be impregnated with liquid flavourings, such as fruit juices and/or sweeteners, without the spoilation of tea-leaves which might normally be expected to result from exposing them to moisture.

WHAT I CLAIM IS:—

1. A process for flavouring tea comprising the steps of spraying dry or raw tea-leaves with liquid flavouring matter, exposing the sprayed tea-leaves to normal ambient air, and heating the tea-leaves thus treated by indirect heat, the tea-leaves being agitated throughout the process.

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the tea-leaves are thinly spread on a vibrating surface during each of the steps of the process.

3. A process according to claim 2 wherein the vibrating surface is the surface of one or more conveyor belts arranged to carry the tea-leaves successively past or through apparatus adapted to carry out the various steps of the process.

4. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the tea-leaves are sprayed for five to ten minutes, exposed to ambient air for three to five minutes, and
5 indirectly heated in an oven or drier for five to ten minutes at a temperature in the range 350°F. to 500°F.

5. A process for flavouring tea substantially as hereinbefore described.

10 6. Flavoured tea when produced by the method of any preceding claim.

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